

WOTSUE

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CORSEN

HOT STUF' #5

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EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Sal Quartuccio

FRONT COVER

Rich Corben

THE FOUR DEMI-GORGONS

Story - Herb Arnold

Art - Tim Kirk

THE BLACK IDOL

Story - Herb Arnold

Art - Stan Dresser

CHARD

Story - Herb Arnold

Art - Rich Corben

CROWN OF FEAR

Story and Art - Herb Arnold

BACK COVER

Herb Arnold

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Bob Keenan

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Welcome to the fifth issue of **Hot Stuf'**. It's a long time between editorials, but I feel this is the beginning of a new era for my publication and there is much to say.

BACK ISSUES

Issue numbers one, two and three are sold out; number four is still available at \$1.50 plus 50¢ postage. We are trying to keep with our quarterly schedule but that is entirely up to you.

HEY LOOK

I can produce **Hot Stuf'** on a **MONTHLY** basis, if our sales were immediate after publication. I know, based on all the mail and personal comments, that **Hot Stuf'** is well received by all of you, but it takes several months to get a new issue out!

You can help by:

- 1] Ordering by mail as soon as our advertising appears in Starlog, The Buyer's Guide and the Comic Reader.
- 2] Purchasing from your favorite dealer who carries **Hot Stuf'**.

3] If your favorite dealer doesn't carry **Hot Stuf'**, grab him by the throat and convince him to carry **Hot Stuf'**.

4] Also, in the back of this issue are pages of house ads - all of the items available are of the highest quality art and reproduction. Try 'em, you'll like 'em!

NOTICE TO ALL DEALERS AND DISTRIBUTORS

Many of you don't realize it - but in a general survey of dealers **around the world - Hot Stuf'** is a faster seller than Heavy Metal or Star-Reach - both of which began publishing after **Hot Stuf'** originated in 1974. Compare the quality of printing, paper stock, cover art, cover price and the best interior art and story. We're trying real hard to produce the **best** comic art magazine around.

CORRESPONDENCE

Hearing from you folks, your comments and suggestions, is one of the most important areas of publishing. It tells me which direction to head in. I thank everyone who has written and I wish I could reply to each one of you, but unfortunately time does not permit it.

FUTURE ISSUES

We are not accepting subscriptions just yet, but we will announce it soon. Of course that doesn't mean that we have no future issues planned. As a matter of fact here is a partial listing of those good people working on projects for **Hot Stuf'** - NEAL ADAMS, RICH CORBEN, KEN BARR, ALEX TOTH, MIKE NASSER, WALLY WOOD, GRAY MORROW, JOHN SEVERIN, BRUCE JONES, WALT SIMONSON, BOB KEENAN, JAN STRNAD, BOB KLINE, JIM BURNS, ED MANLEY, ERNIE COLON, GAIL SCHLESSER, WILLIAM STILLWELL, HERB ARNOLD, TIM KIRK, STAN DRESSER, CARL POTTS, BIL MAHER, GREG POTTER, CLYDE CALDWELL, TONY DEZUNIGA AND MANY MORE.

STARSPAWN

My very good friend and assistant editor, Bob Keenan has just published his first project and quite a good one it is too! Starspawn is a great new sci-fi character created by Bob, and by Mike Nasser. The set of four 11 x 14 black and white tone prints is some of Mike's finer work. The prints come in an illustrated envelope with a brief story line for each print. This exciting package has a very limited edition so turn to the back pages fast and order now!

OH! AND ONE MORE THING!

You may have noticed that we've just published Volume Two of **The Art of Neal Adams**. Neal is undoubtedly the most popular and talented artist ever to hit comic art. This new collection of mostly never-before-seen work by Neal Adams is an immediate smash! Especially a 16 page thriller that will tantalize every Adams fan and will most likely create several new Adams followers. P.S. - Volume Three is not too far away gang. And we still have copies of Volume One available [but hurry!]

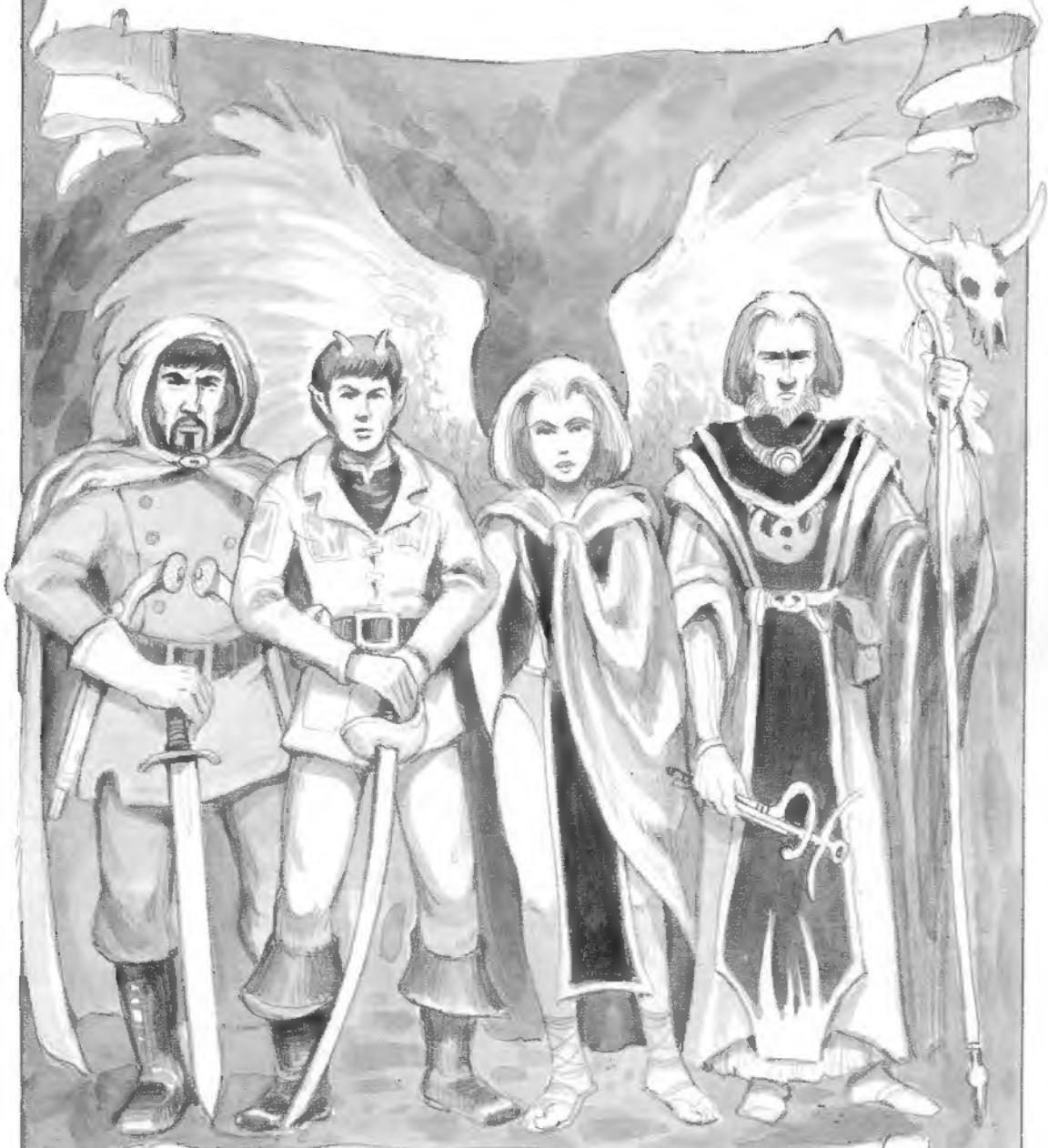
Well, thanks for listening and for your support. Enjoy the issue. See ya' next time.

Sal Quartuccio

SGT MARK E. RAINY
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CAMP PENDLETON, CA 92055

TALES OUT OF EIRVTHIA

BOOK II



Eirvthia—the magic world men know well, but do not know. A world where legends and phantasies still live. Where warriors fight on the side of Order and wizards fight for Chaos. In the southern continent of Estravan sorcery is afoot...

The FOUR DEMI-GORGONS

An agent of wizards has sought rest here, at the castle of a nobleman who is an ally of the evil wizard Sternblack, who is the agent's master...

... Ah, thank you, Lord Arvek! You always have delicious meals... our friend, Sternblack will thank you generously for such hospitality.

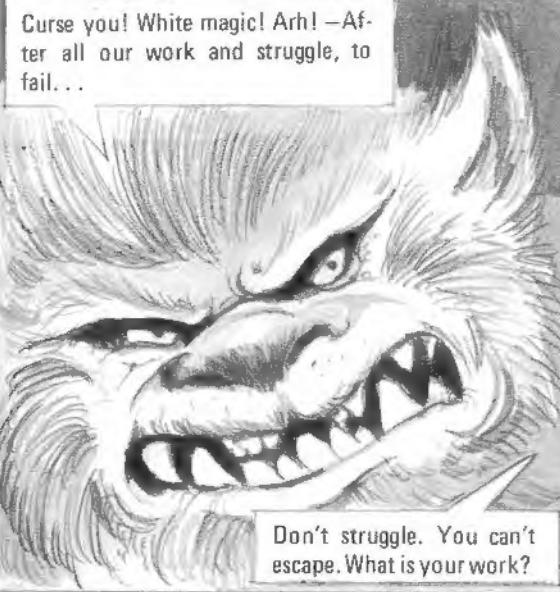
You're quite welcome.

Wha-?! I can't move...
I'm frozen—Arvek??!

Because you are immobilized by the magic candles set before you. You see I pretend to be Sternblack's ally—I'm a doubledealer!

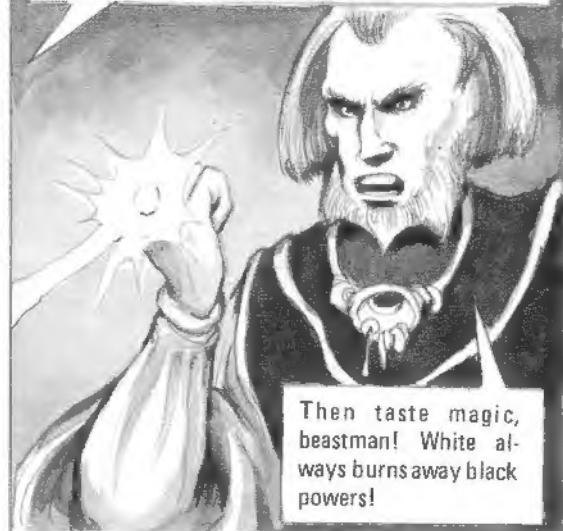
Meet my real aide, Almandine, the white wizard. The girl is Trwill, his aide, an air sprite.

Curse you! White magic! Arh! —After all our work and struggle, to fail...



Don't struggle. You can't escape. What is your work?

Be damned Arvek, I'll not tell you or your stink-ing white friends!



Then taste magic, beastman! White always burns away black powers!

Aarrgh! —It shrivels me—Stop!—I'll tell—LISTEN!!



Good! But be warned, I can see lies!

Uhh!... uh! No, no lies! There—in my satchel—a statue, get it out.



This black idol?

Aye! A powerful black idol... whose history is stained with blood... I got it from a mercenary of the east for my wizards. I am to take it to another mercenary who'll take it south...



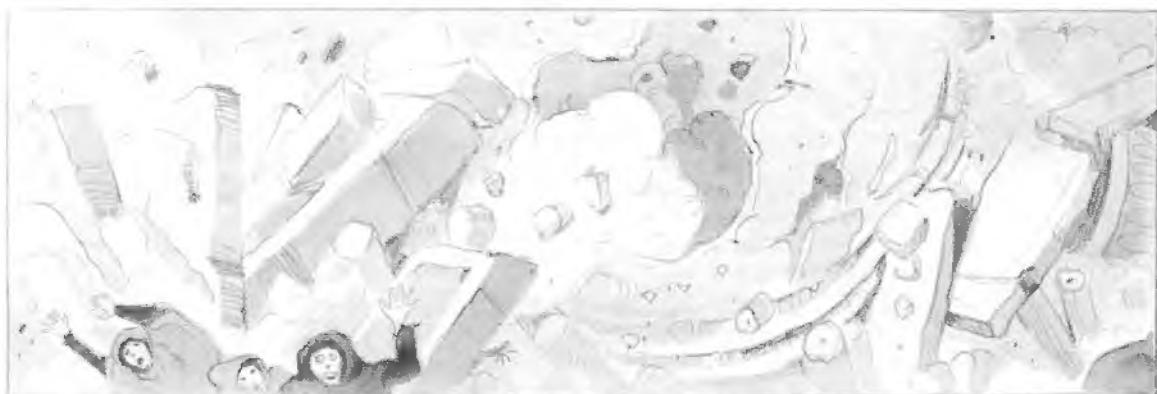
What is it?

Listen, damned white wizard... In prehistoric times ancients believed that four great Demi-Gorgons dwelt at the four corners of the world. All lived beneath the earth...





Each Demi-Gorgon had an entrance to earth through its own shrine. To allow the creatures to enter earth their worshippers had to use a magic idol of the monsters. Without these they were locked in the earth...



Through cataclysms the Demi-Gorgons of the West and North were cut off from the other two. All passionately hated each other and the remaining two feuded...



The Demi-Gorgons fought through their fanatical worshippers. The southern worshippers succeeded in stealing the idol of the Eastern Demi-Gorgon and cast it into the sea...



Having lost the key to their own Demi-Gorgon, the easterners retaliated by seizing the black idol of the Southern Demi-Gorgon...



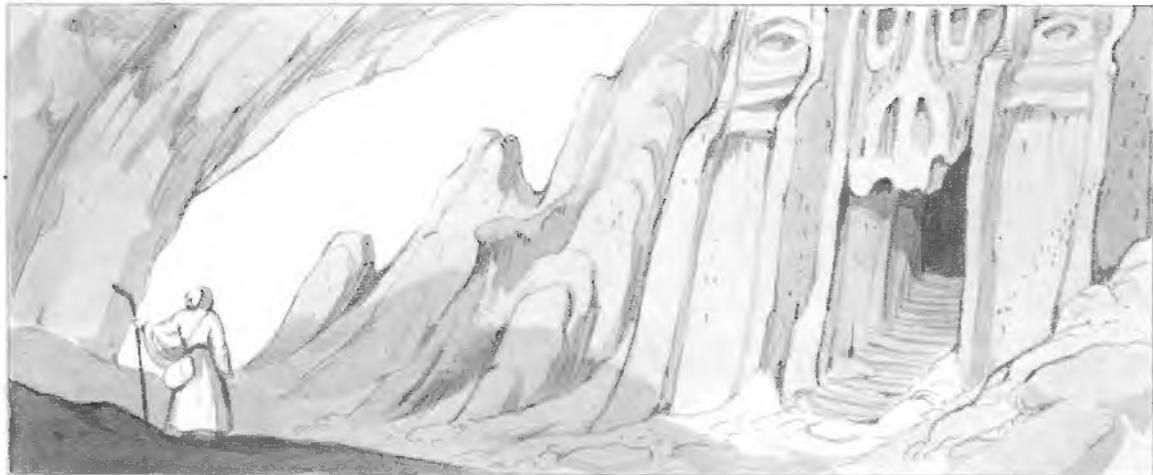
This action precipitated such a great and bloody war between the rival religions that the righteous nations of Eirvthia turned on the fanatics...



Neither cult group could release their imprisoned Demi-Gorgons and so the nations scattered the devil-worshippers...



Yet by sinister cunning the Eastern cult managed to survive intact and carried their blasphemous religion on into the years. They believed this was due to possessing the black idol of their southern rivals, feeling it was a charm of luck and power...



The legends passed through the years... finally, Lormos, wizard of Estravan, my master, stumbled on the lost, sand-covered shrine of the Demi-Gorgon of the South. There he found a growing remnant of its unholy cult.

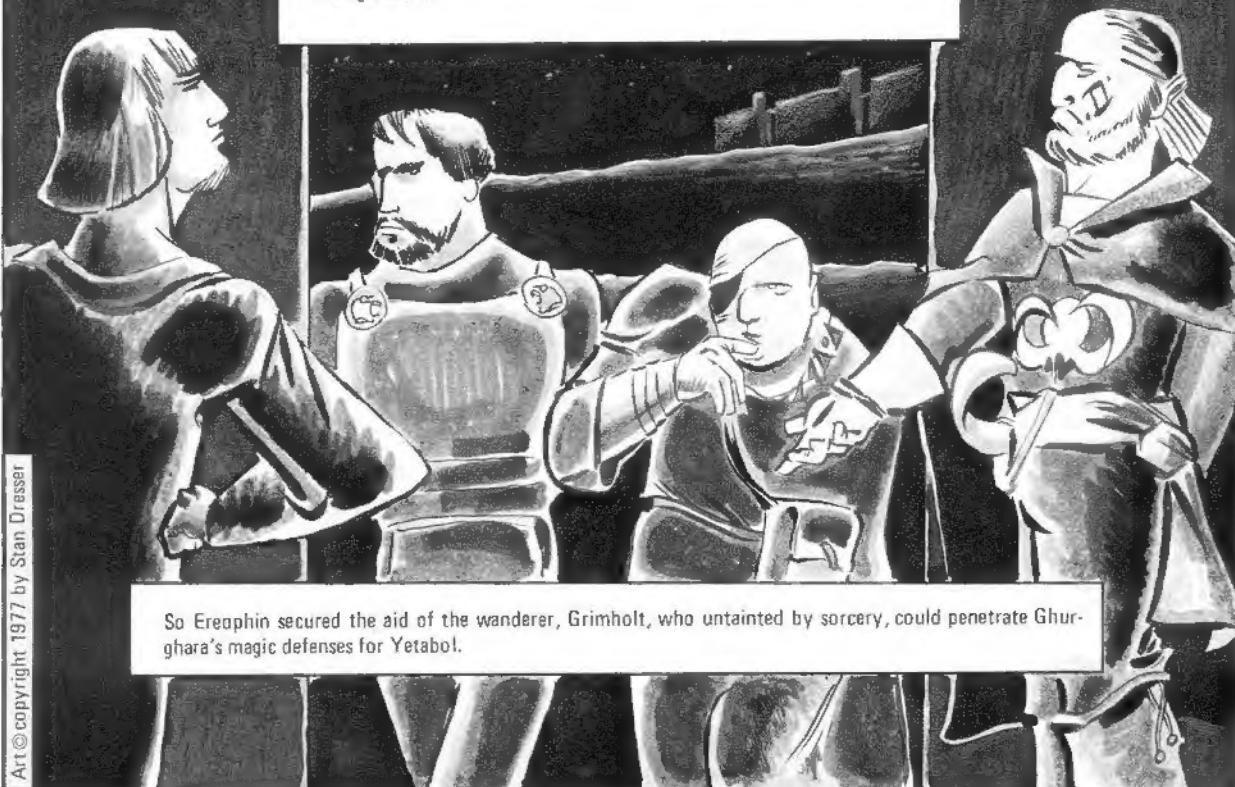


This cult still hoped to recover its black idol, long stolen. Seeing a chance to gather an army of fanatics to ravage Estravan, Lormos called on his northern cousin, Rhovan Sternblack, to aid him. Sternblack then learned the rival cult of the east still existed and held the revered black idol...



Sternblack learned a war-like nation was besieging the eastern country of devil-worshippers. Here was a perfect opportunity to steal back the black idol. Accordingly, he employed and dispatched spies, familiars and mercenaries to secure the weird prize.

Yetabol had fought long against the devil-worshipping country of Ghurghara and still they could not avail. It was told Ghurghara was invulnerable because of a magic power in the city. A mysterious nobleman of the West, Ereaphin, offered to seek and destroy this power. Yet because he dabbled in magic Ereaphin could not brave the protective magic of Ghurghara...



So Ereaphin secured the aid of the wanderer, Grimholt, who untainted by sorcery, could penetrate Ghurghara's magic defenses for Yetabol.

THE CITY OF THE BLACK IDOL

Fine. Once I secretly get into the city what then King Melrochar?

You must go to the temple of the Demi-Gorgon of the East and steal a certain black idol there.

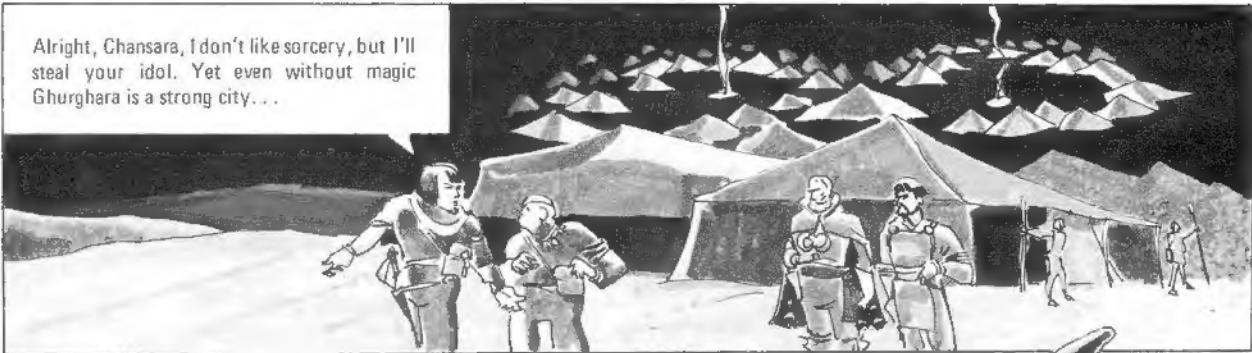


An idol
... ?



Yes, Grimholt, for the folk of Ghurghara believe the black idol offers them magic protection. They revere it. Without it the city will fall!

Alright, Chansara, I don't like sorcery, but I'll steal your idol. Yet even without magic Ghurghara is a strong city...



How can even Yetabol's army hope to scale its huge walls... You are all infantry!

Behold!



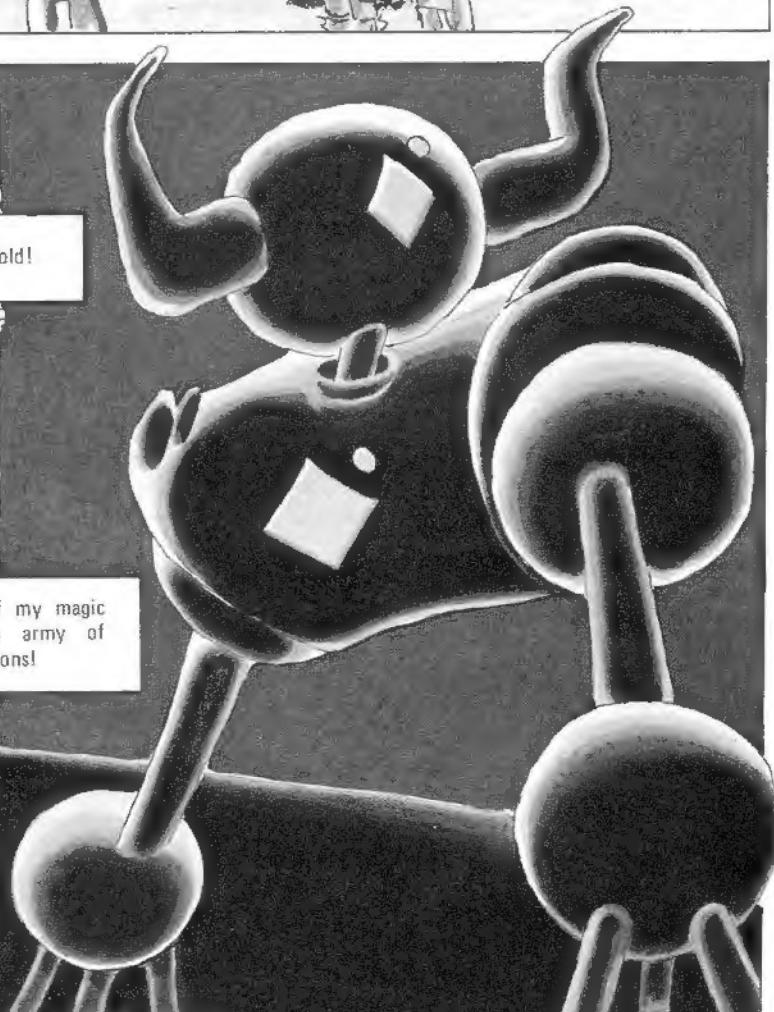
The result of my magic handiwork—an army of metal automatons!



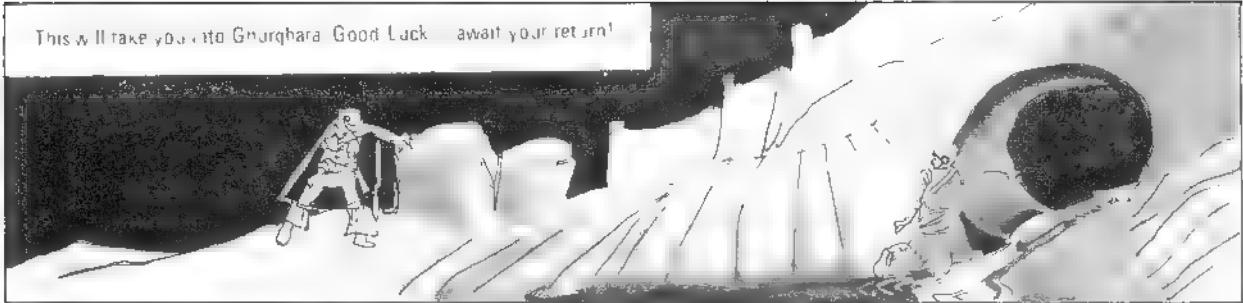
Each fighting tower is equipped with the prism of the Fiery shower of Elteron. With them we'll scale the walls and incinerate the evil folk!



But we can only advance on Ghurghara if the magic idol is removed, the defense broken. Go—complete the quest, Grimholt!

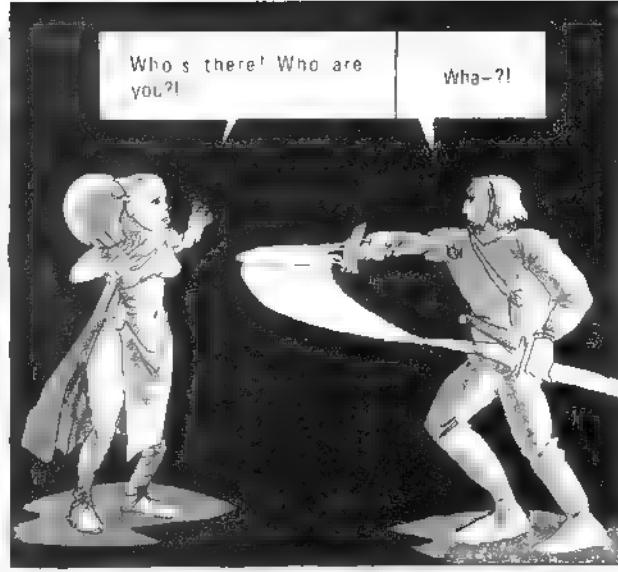


This will take you into Ghurghara. Good Luck... await your return!



Dressed Granholt secretly entered the city from the sewers. Inside he made for the temple but the fortified town was frantic on the move.







There is the black doll
Hurry! Take it!

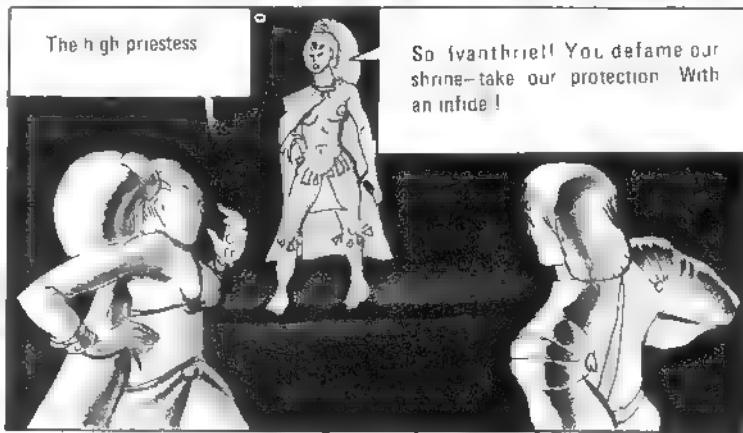
Stee cannot a ways protect
come we go!

Easy girl I've got it no need
to fear I've a strong sword
to protect us!

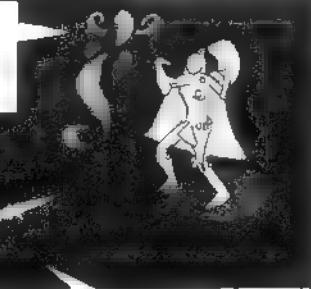


The high priestess

So Ivanthriel! You defame our
shrine—take our protection. With
an infide!

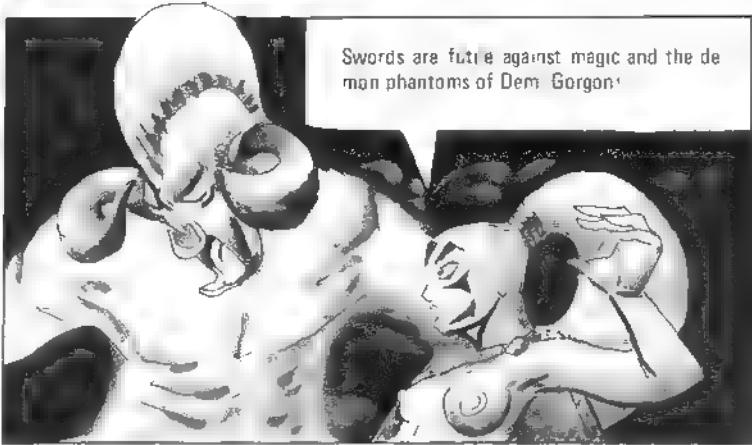


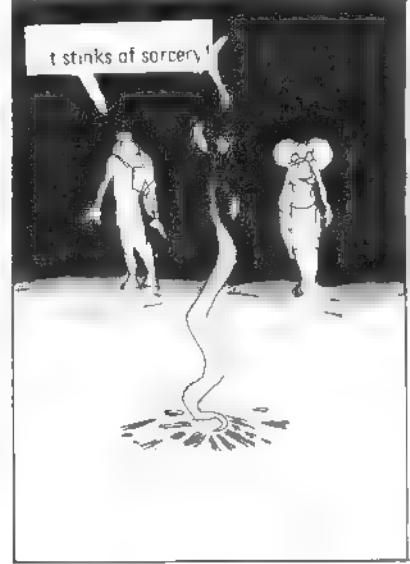
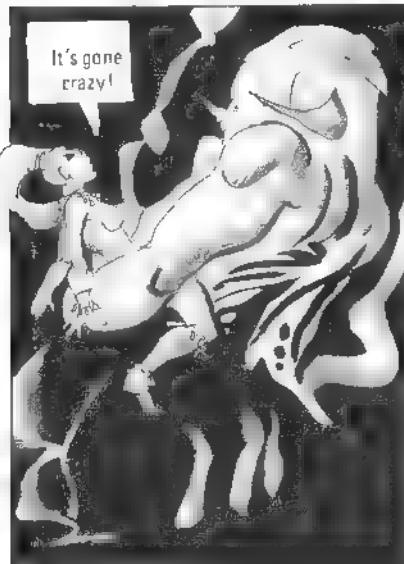
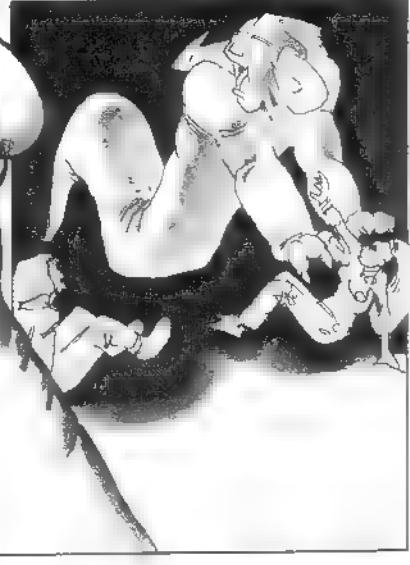
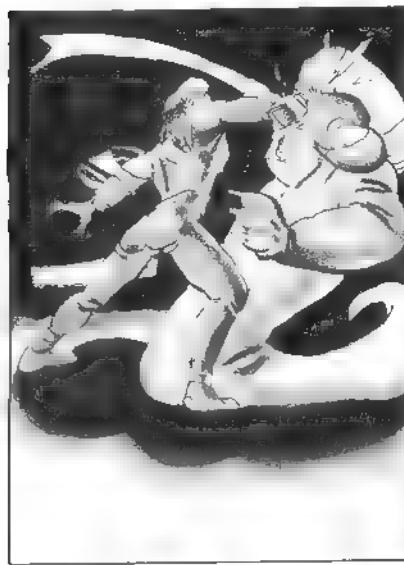
You w i l d e s o w l y ! Ivanthriel, you w i l l
watch him—then you w i l l follow!



Hold your words, witch, or I'll get
you!

Swords are futile against magic and the de
mon phantoms of Dem Gorgon!





Later, outside the city

Why do you need it? Ghurghara is unprotected now, attack it. I'm keeping the idol!

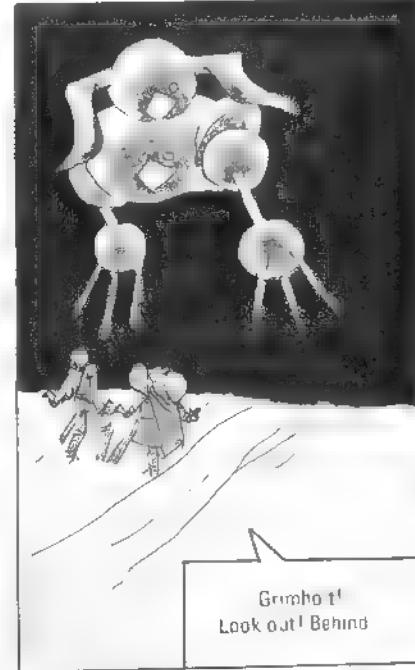
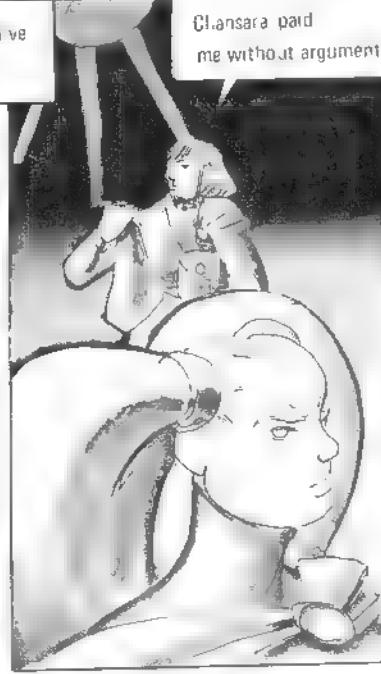
What? Why do you not give us the idol?



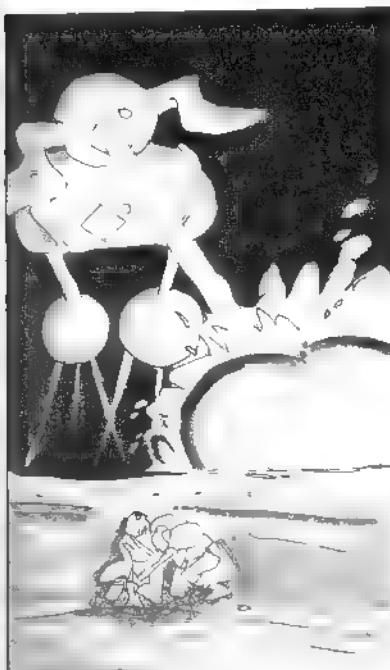
He's right... why worry! Sound the attack! Give him his reward and see him off!

Chansara paid me without argument

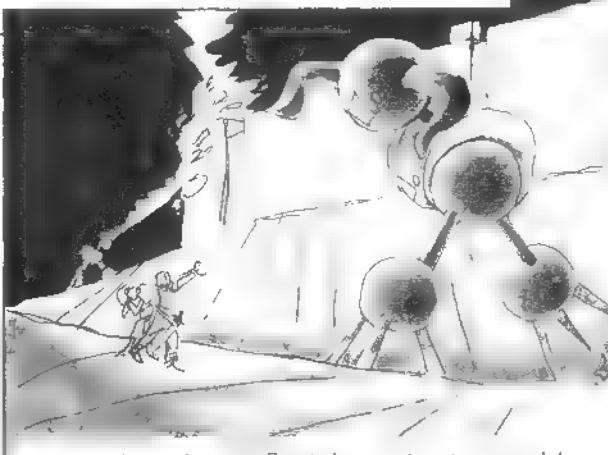
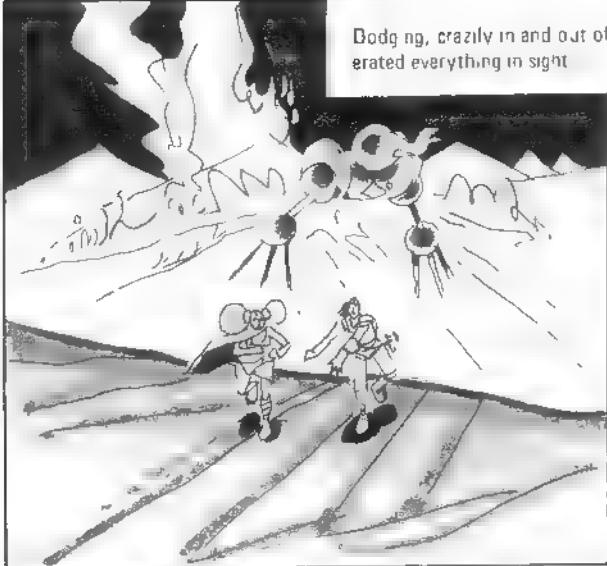
As you say, King Me rochar!



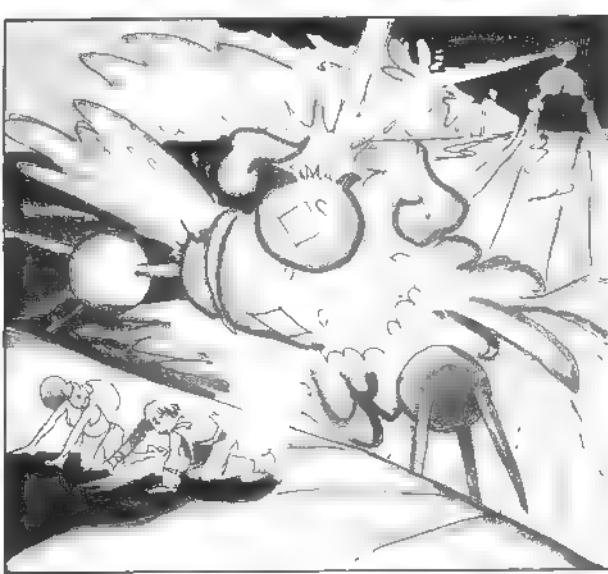
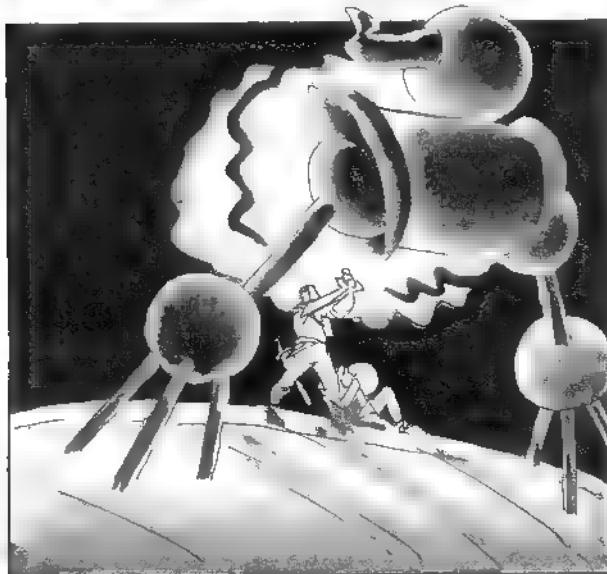
Grimbo! Look out! Behind



Bodging, crazily in and out of camp Grimholt led a wild chase while the automaton incinerated everything in sight



As he was losing the battle Grimholt remembered a magic idol

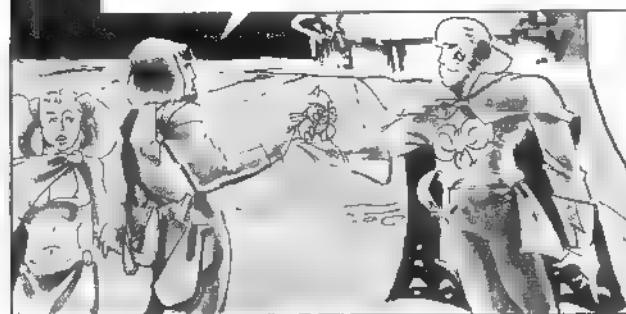


Once in safety Ereophin asked for the black idol

So! Ghurghara talks!

I'll find some small reward in this, my friend

Thank the Gods! Here - take it! It's probably cursed! You're
fuse to share my gold



So the black idol was carried away by Ereophin, away from the leveled city of Ghurghara. He crossed desert and mountains to the far east.



Yet he was always conscious of being followed. The cult of Demi Gorgon worshippers wanted their revenge... they employed the most skilled and insidious agents to retrieve the idol.



The cult employed deadly assassins to track and kill the nobleman. Fortunately, Ereophin outrode them.

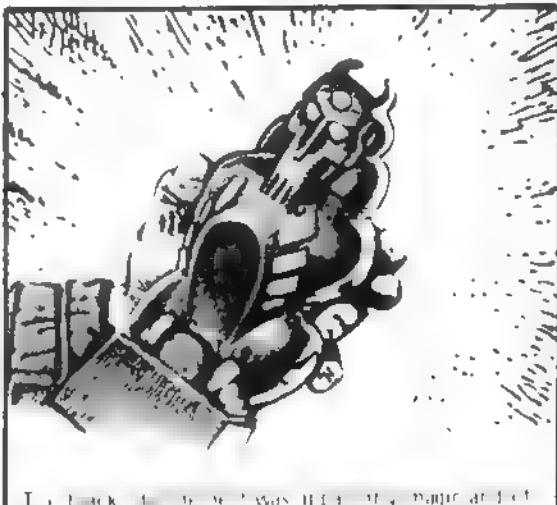


Gladly he gave his undesirable burden to a sailor at his destination. The sailor then left to pass the idol to the next contact, a mercenary who had a group of warriors to protect the prize.

GUARD



To the left, the last of his world was born. The sun was to be the new planet. Yet the super-soldier was destined to be the last.



To back up the new world was the last major and last power in the old assassins who tracked him and killed the last of his kind.



A year of the last days of the world
and the last days of the last world.

THE GUARD
© 1977 RICHARD CORREN & HERB ARNOLD

Yet the adventure had offered good money so he accepted it from the six speaking dark stranger. He and his men were to carry a certain do to the eastern seaboard.



Guard! Here! (choke) Take this damned do. I've outrun THEM!



They were to get the do from a courier a sailor, but they found the agent wounded and dying.

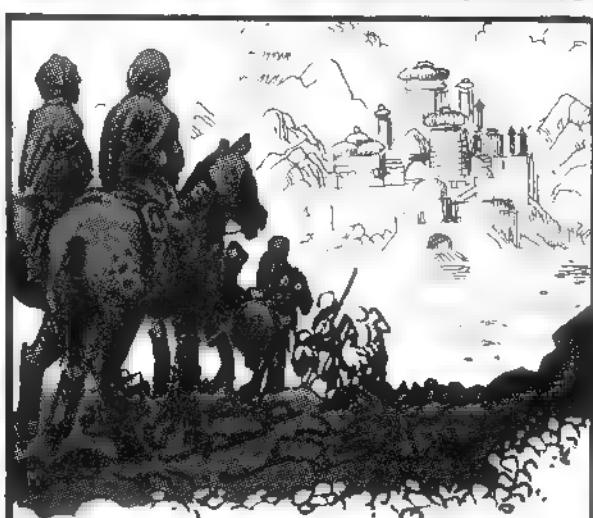
Our master didn't tell us we were trying (choke) to retrieve this "precious" idol!



No wonder they had fought men for such a small job! We've been tricked. Well, no matter. We'll do the job anyway.



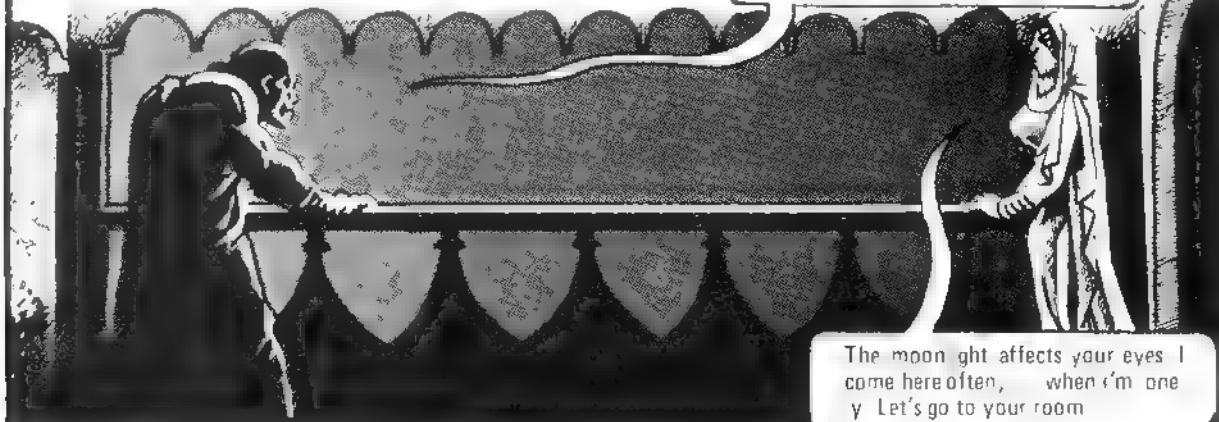
Alert to danger, Chard and the horsemen hastily left the town.



Three days journey brought them to the safety of Bakreesh. Yet always they felt trackers were behind them.

At a comfortable lodge Chard relaxed on a balcony while his men ca
roused downstairs. There he met the girl

You girl are you well? You look
pale. What are you doing here?



The moonlight affects your eyes. I
come here often, when I'm alone.
Let's go to your room

Chard obliged the willing girl, yet in the soft furs of his room he was
puzzled



Just a lonely woman, one who's seen many sad years
alone



Then warm me Chard! Take away my loneliness and
cold

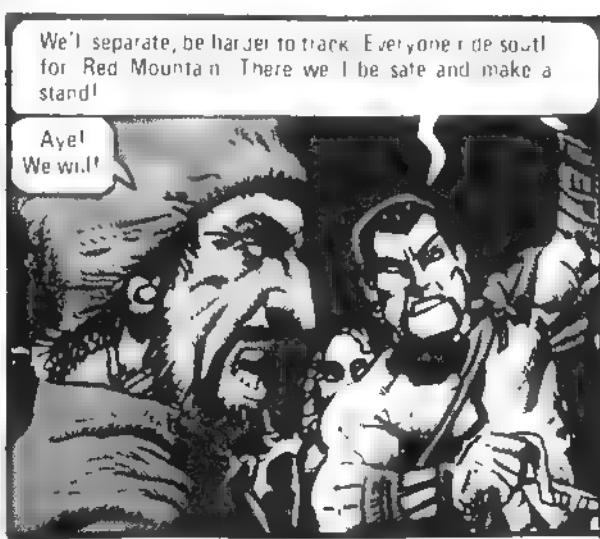


Assassins!
UHHH!





A hard night's ride brought them far from Bakreesh
They rested, assured they were safe



AAIIIEEEEE!



Gods!
The devils
tracked us

AAIIIEEEEE!



It was maddening how fast and silently these infernal killers had paced them. But the horsemen of the steppes were fast riders.

The dawn's breaking, Astaphea! If those killers so low, now we can see them!

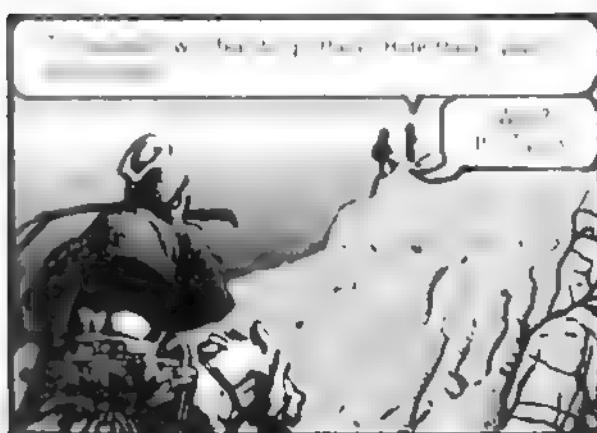


Astaphea gone!
Gods, did they
hit her?



Chard doublebacked, but found no trace of the girl. Certain the assassins didn't have her, Chard headed south again.





Tyros, what?



Secretly for years, I've belonged to that assassin cult that worshipped that dem gorgan idol in the dev city of Ghurghara. It was stolen.



An old friend would never be suspected of being an assassin, now would he Chard?

Now we'll have it back! And your head. Wha ?

Chard, Hurry!



It's your head I'll take INSTEAD TRAITOR!





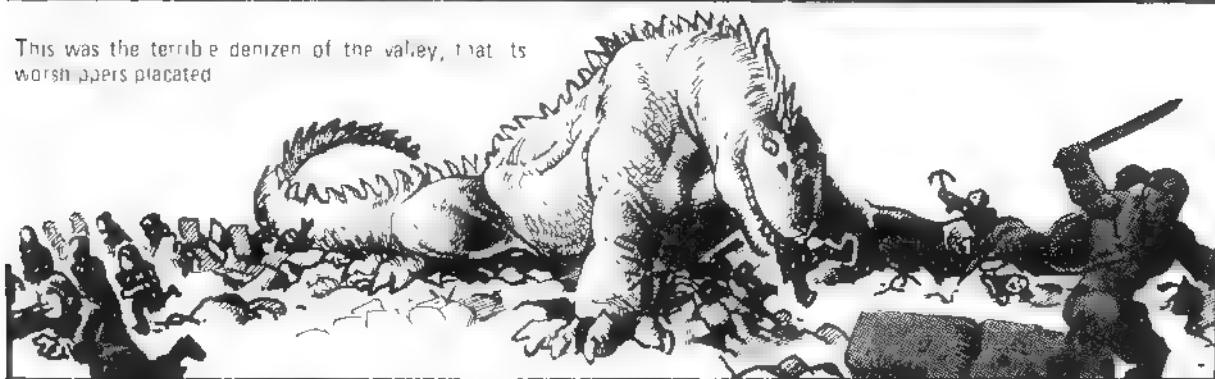
Aye His close friend an assassin! Chard hurried down into the taboo burial ground to await Tyvos' followers



Climbing to a vantage point he readied to a last fight as the kili pei appeared



This was the terrible denizen of the valley, that its worshippers placated



the being they fed their dead and infidels to



Stunned in his backward glance Charc recognized the lovely face in the cold marble ASTAPHEA



Charc madly climbed from the taboo valley. Wearily he trekked miles to his seaport destination.

You're the next courier. He'll take the do... I'm through with it!



It stinks of sorcery and has killed all my friends! Watch out! Assassins covet it! I'm glad to be done with it.



I only hope that do... leads to no more evil



THE END

And so the ido came into my hands. I made east, across the sea to Estravan. Here I made for Arvek's castle, yet always I've felt fo lowed



I fear the assassins have come east as well! I was to pass the dol on to the next contact—Turant, a mercenary



Where is he?

No! My lords plan to gain support of the southern cult wth the idoll! Raise an army to



Lies! The monster exists! What does Sternblack plan?

In Omothros, where he'll join the merchant Wurtez. Using sandboats they'll journey south to the shrine of the Southern Demi Gorgon



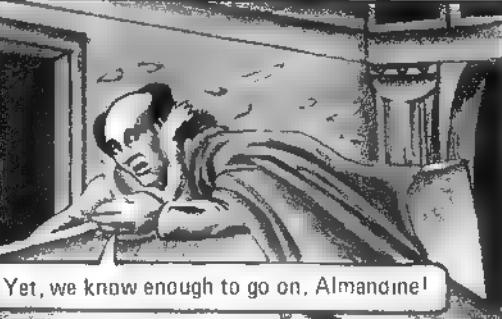
Where they'll release the monster!

I refuse to tell

Look Out!!

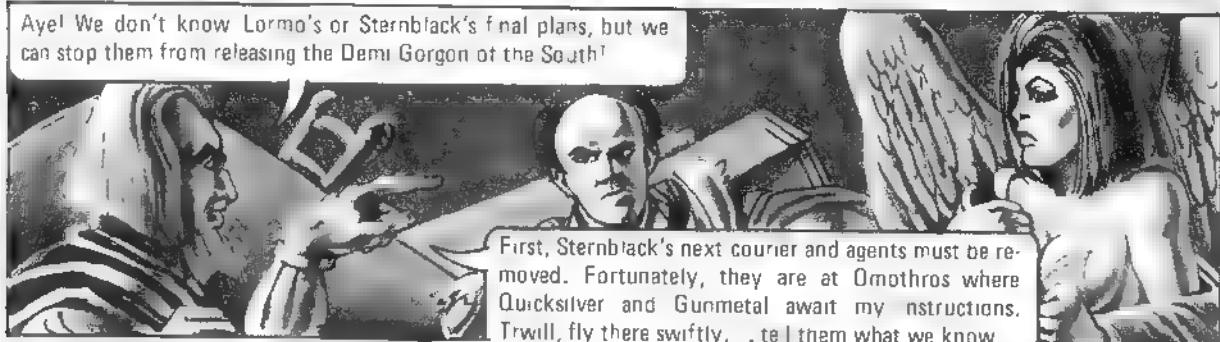


Blast that Demon! Certainly now he won't tell me what I want to know



Yet, we know enough to go on, Almandine!

Aye! We don't know Lormo's or Sternblack's final plans, but we can stop them from releasing the Demi Gorgon of the South!



First, Sternblack's next courier and agents must be removed. Fortunately, they are at Omothros where Quicksilver and Gunmetal await my instructions. Trwill, fly there swiftly. ... tell them what we know.

Omothros, a large seaport of Estravan, lay burnt and humid beneath a blistering sun. The desert and death prowled along its outs de walls, seeking egress to the sea's edge



Sometimes death finds its way from the sandy wastes into the dusty streets and alleys.

Grettamor!! Gods! I swore I'd get you!

CROWN OF GEAR

Turant, the mercenary, felt that death fast closing on him. Moments before he had taken from a courier the
idol Lord Sternblack had sent him for along with warnings of assassins stalking Sternblack's couriers

So—an assassin now, Dog?!

I've finally got you, Gretta
mora! After fifteen years!

Aye! Fifteen years! I'm the last from our outpost—but you'll
not kill me too!

I revenge those your traitors killed!

Gauahhh!

Only the sands and blazing sun heard Gunmetal's vengeful words in the silent alley. Words that would seem
strange to his friends halfway across the city.

You dare insinuate my linens are maggot
infested, you fat—

Here, merchant—take a closer look
at your linens and see the truth!

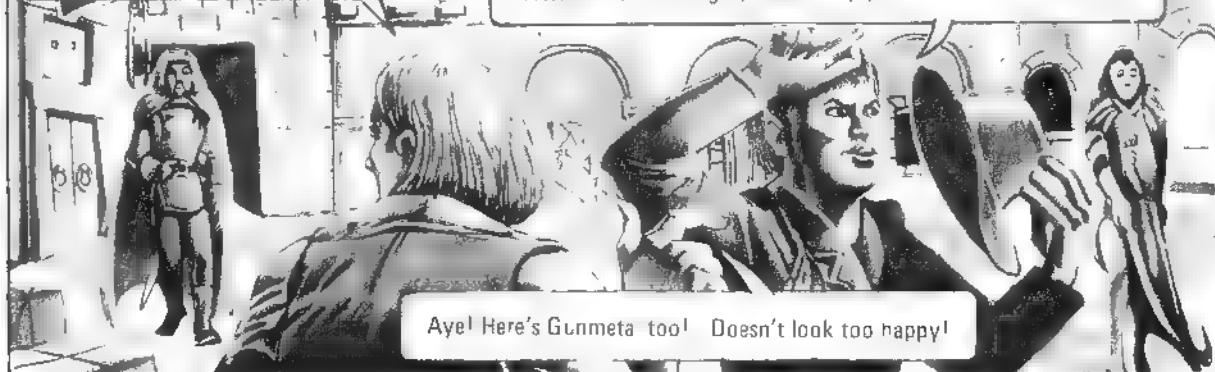
Wurtez, my portliness has nothing to do
with your second rate goods!

Yaggh! Thieves!!

Quick! Tie him!

Why'd you let you talk me into this mad venture?

Because Almandine offers you rare goods, businessman! Here's Trw II. Come on girl, tell us why you had us do these deeds



Aye! Here's Gunmetal too! Doesn't look too happy!

The morning hours turned to noontime as Trw II spoke of all the beastman had told Almandine... of the Black idol of Lormos' and Sternblack's plans...

And so the last courier was Turant and he said, Wurtez, was to take him south to meet others for the final leg of the journey



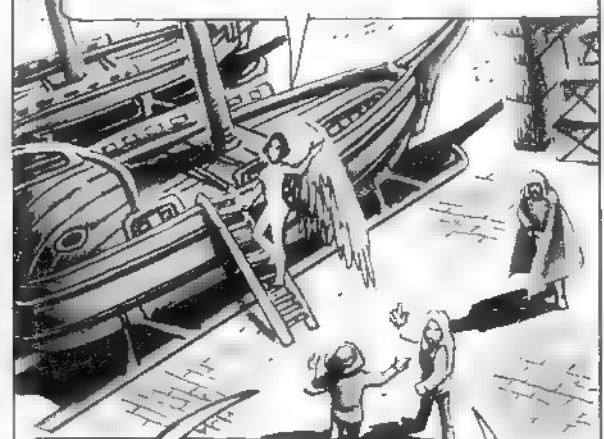
And so you need Gunmetal to impersonate Turant and Flint to impersonate Wurtez

Groan!



Exactly. The mercenaries we meet will take us to the temple of the Demi-Gorgon, whom we must try to destroy

We will take Wurtez's sand ships there. Flint is familiar with their operation



Amazing! I thought all you could do was lead a mule!

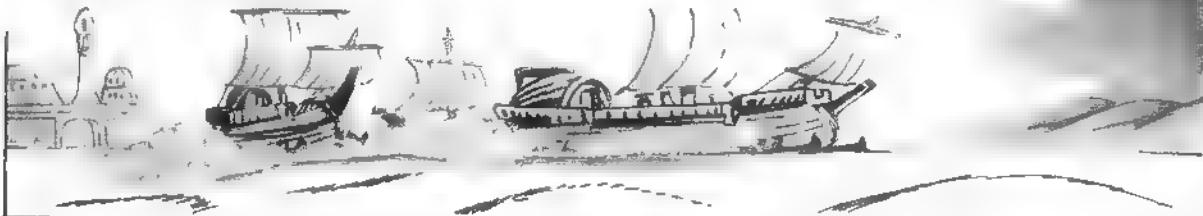
Shazl

We must move fast! To ensure this I'm charming the boats with air spirits.



Even in a dead wind the boats will move swiftly under their magic power

Hurriedly the sandships were loaded with supplies and by late afternoon the adventurers sped away into the desert wastes beyond Omothros.

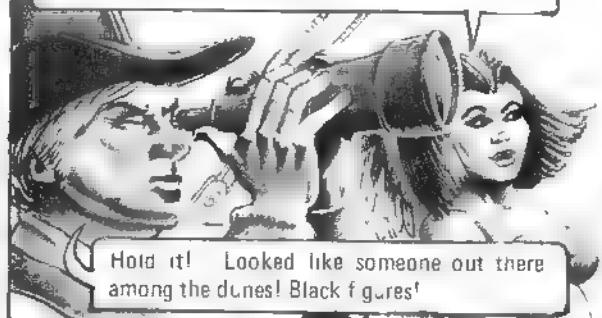


Have you ever been out here in your travels?

Not very far. Many dangers lurk in this desert: carnivores, marauders, crystal forests. Those crystal trees could cut this sandboat to shreds!

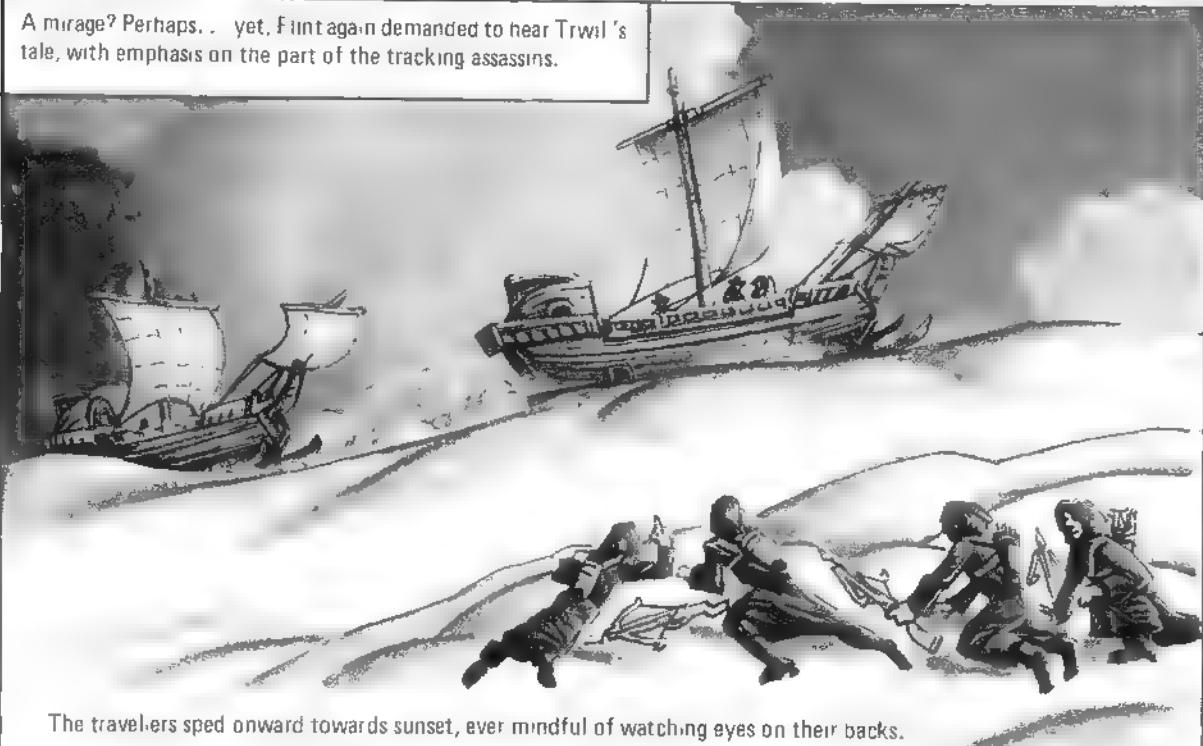


No worry there, my fellow air spirits will guide us safely when I call on them!



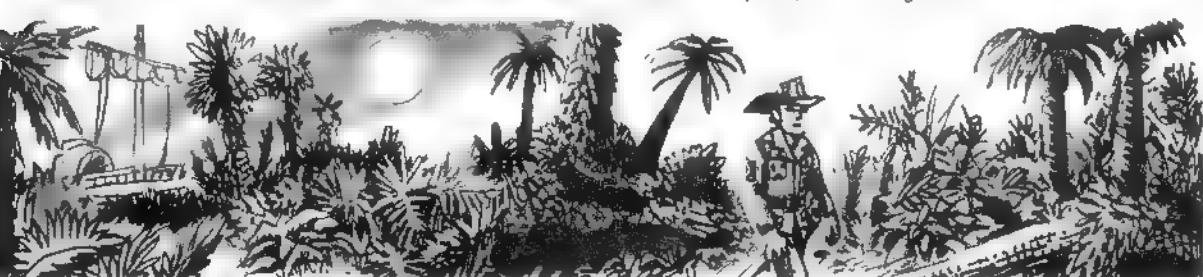
Hold it! Looked like someone out there among the dunes! Black figures!

A mirage? Perhaps... yet, Flint again demanded to hear Trwil's tale, with emphasis on the part of the tracking assassins.



The travellers sped onward towards sunset, ever mindful of watching eyes on their backs.

Finally, a cool oasis was reached. As the moon rose, Quicksilver retired to a quiet part of the glade.



I'm glad you came, Quicksilver. We haven't had time to be alone.



I'm just thinking about how you told me to magically obliterate the Demi Gorgon. I may not come out of there alive—

I'll protect you!



What a strange life I'm feeling guided

We air spirits believe life is a game, played by the gods. We are all good or bad pawns!

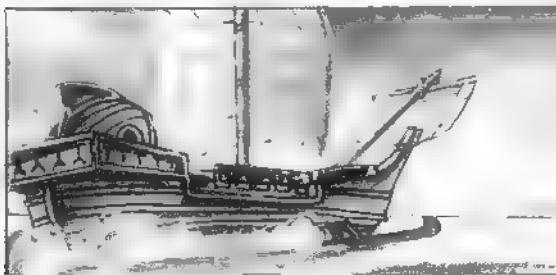


Quick, is it so bad to serve the cause of Order?

No freedom! And recently I've found out I'm a demi-god!



As the light of dawn burned the rendezvous cliffs the four adventurers, masquerading as Turant, Wurtez, and their attendants arrived before the waiting mercenaries.



Their guide was Hador, a mercenary who was accompanied by Kreen, a sly and sinister mediator representing both warlords, Lormos and Sternblack.

You've braved the dangers of the desert and your quest will soon be ended, Turant. Two weeks' journey from here lies the mountain shrine where the black idol will finally come back to its place.

Lords Lormos and Sternblack will greatly reward you!

Perhaps, Hador, perhaps ...

Those are rewarded who serve well and give themselves to our lords completely, such as I. There is no tolerance of disobedience.

Still we should reward good work

... Yet we ... I must be sure of obedience!

I always do any job well, little man!

Good! Do so!—and remember ... we watch!

... Yes, always watch him! Must do that!

Mind him not. Kreen's strange, but his magic has safely guided us across the desert.

Makes me uncomfortable—he seems like a mumbling crowd.

Who are these folk?

The girl's a wench I took in Omatros—a good servant. Other's a poet whose songs soothe me.

You've damned expensive tastes! Still a song at the camp fire will be good!

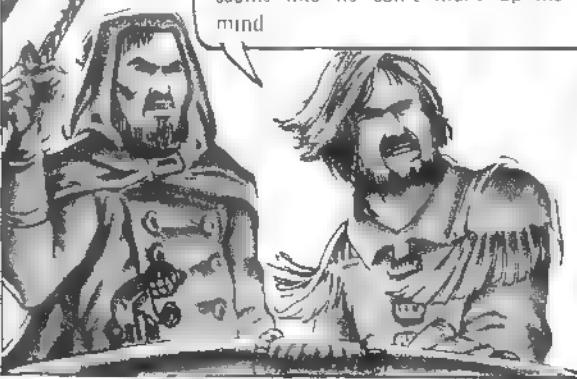
The mercenaries transferred aboard the sandship caravan and the expedition headed deeper south



Finally, weeks later, the goal was near

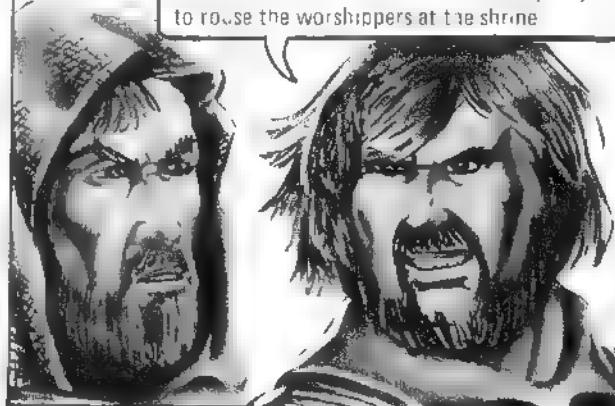
Soon we reach the shrine. I'll be glad to be done and say farewell to our double-taking friend!

Aye! Kruen gets on my nerves. He seems like he can't make up his mind.



What happens when he releases the Demi-Gorgon?

Hah! The Gorgon's a myth, man! Lormos and Sternblack want that black idol you got to rouse the worshippers at the shrine.



Surely you knew they planned to raise an army of fanatics loyal to the black idol. Those desert warriors are fierce.

Hador!!



Our lords' plans are their own.

... We must tell no one...

No one...



Turant, the black idol! We must study it to ascertain if it is the real one!

As Kreen grumbled to himself, looking over the idol in his cabin he failed to see two figures in the ceiling panels .

It has to be real! After all this time and work!



It'd better be real or you'll suffer, don't!... Shush! I'm sure it's real... Ah! There is one way to tell for certain!



Negg-Matowla! Rhagg Cedon! Come forth! Give me sight of yourself!



A whirlwind blew through the small room. Amid a burst of coruscations and swirling smoke Kreen sat rigid while hideous phantoms, projections of the Demi Gorgon, flowed in wild dance around the idol. Aghast, Trwll and Quicksilver trembled at the sight.



Hours after the sandboats halted and camp was made

What's the matter? You look sick!

Ho! A song, poet! The men are jumpy . . . soothe our nerves! We spotted some trackers, probably desert dwellers behind us!

Never mind! Just be ready to run when I tell you, Flint!

Alright. A song fit for the occasion 'The Queen of Darkness'

Vaneth nel, young and fair
Sk led in beauty and in mag c
Charmed young men of her kingdom
Woven spel s, potent words of amorous pleadings
Held them al in thrall

Singing, dancing, pretty Vaneth nel
Lovers she calls, one or all,
Till one day those powers lost
By which she held them
One by one they did leave her
Now to ancient tomes,
Hoary black books of darkness,
These she turned to help her

A price to pay for more knowledge
Vaneth nel, she must g ve
So to bleak hills de,
Beneath white stone rings,
At the m dnight tol
She payed tribute rightly so

Those Powers of Darkness did enfold her,
Take that she did offer
Crushed white neck,
Tore her soft skin,
Her blood ed heart they tore out—

Quiet! I heard something—
out there! Someone's com-
ing!

Durad, you gave us a scare!

Would've been here sooner. . . thought I saw
some men sneaking around the crystal forest
outside camp . . . nothing, though.

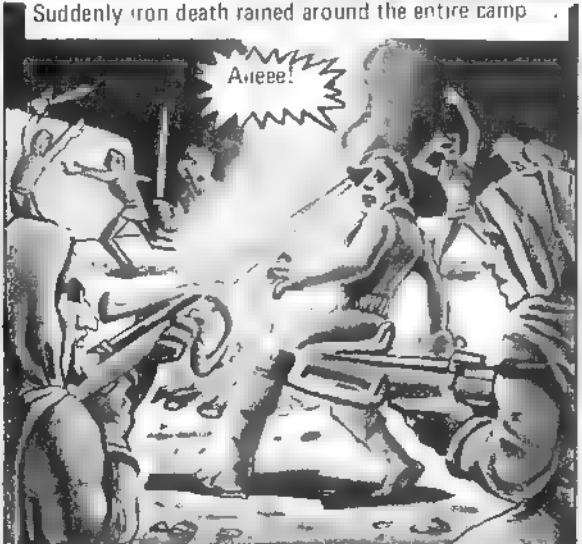
Probably spooks of a bad song! How are
things at the shrine? Go get some food, see
your old friend Turant.



We fled south to Estravan, but you still found us!



Gods! It's those Eastern assassins we heard about! Down!

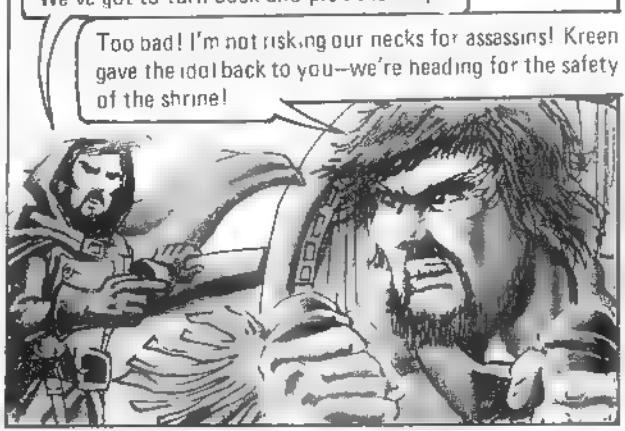




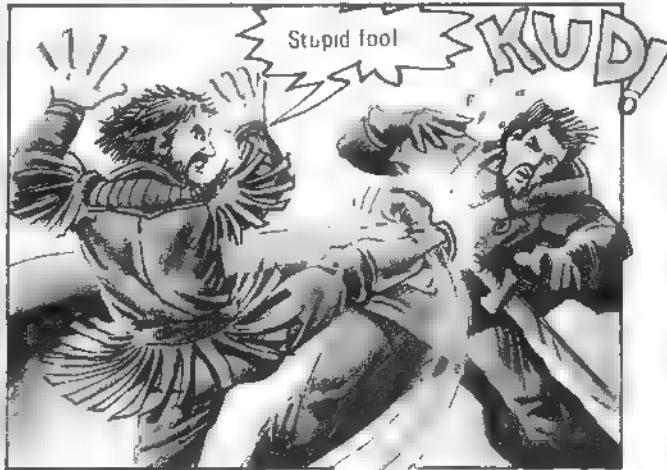
Damn! Quicksilver's boat got wrecked!



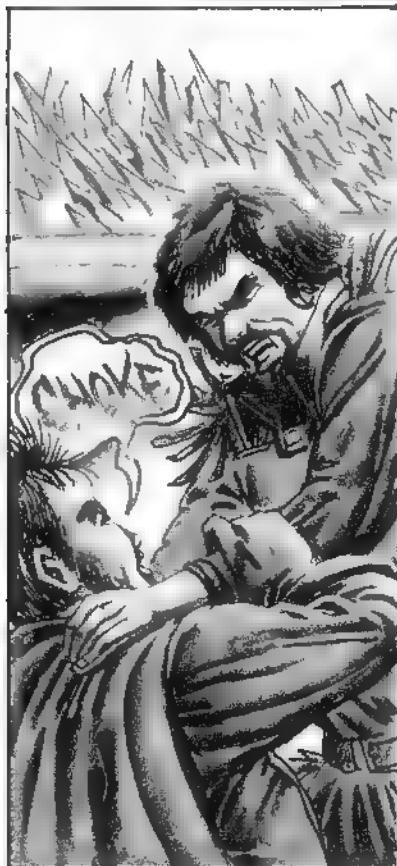
We've got to turn back and pick them up!



There's your damned ido! Back there with them! Now turn around!!



CHOK



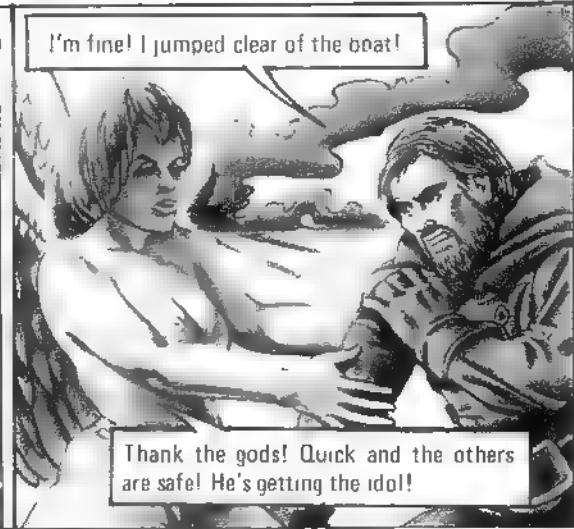
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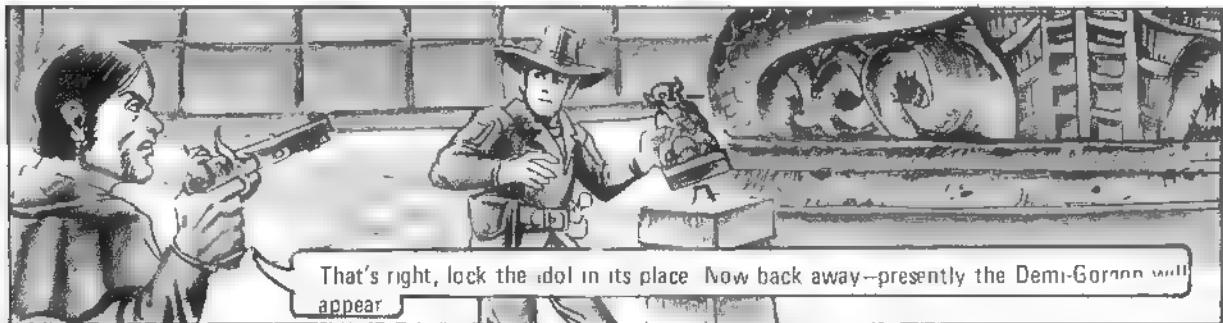
LOOK OUT!!



VERGASSUNG



The great arched vault of the shrine stretched away in darkness. Its walls of mirrored metal, Quick-
siver knew, was for the benefit of worshippers not daring to look on the Demi-Gorgon's face...



Its appearance causes unendurable fear. It and its brothers once held nations in sway. So will it be again.

Lords Lormos and Sternblack can use this fear to crown themselves rulers of Estravan... later perhaps of all Eirvthia!

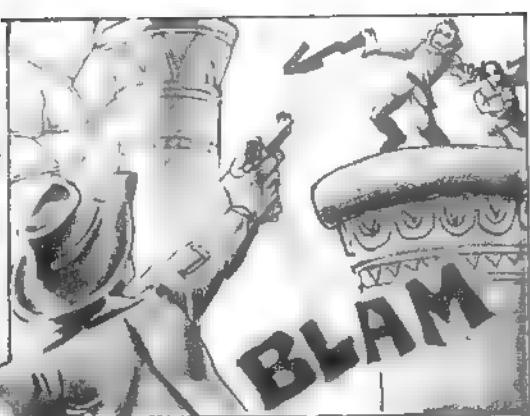
With magic such as this... And since both Lormos and Sternblack possess my mind I can control the monster.



How can even they be immune to its fear?



A feat, alas,
you won't see



It had sat patiently for centuries, waiting for its worshippers to free it. Now it was free! Free to unleash its fear and terrible might on these infidels.

It was true! Mere sight of the monster reduced men to total, unreasoning fear.



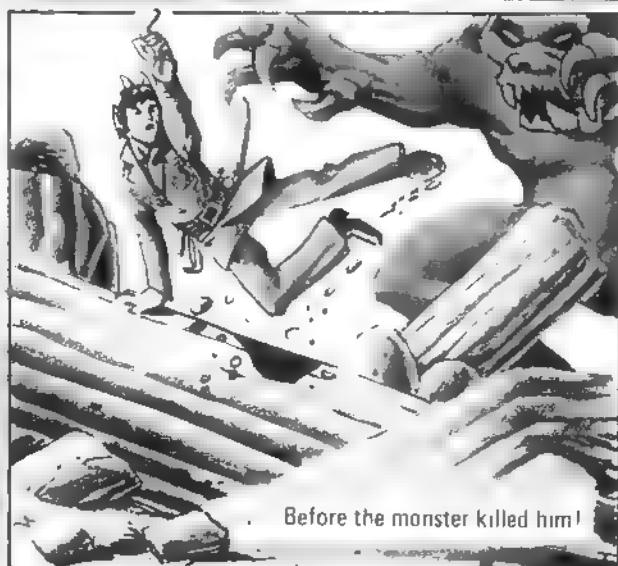
Quicksilver stumbled to where the amulet lay.



All fear truly dropped from the wearer of the charm!



Now he had to destroy the Demi Gorgon and its temple with magic!



Before the monster killed him!



RAARRRR!



Sure he couldn't outrun the monster Quicksilver finished the magic powder circle and prepared to die in its igniting .



Yet, it was not his day to die, for



Flying through a rent in the vault Trw! bore them high over the shrine. Quicksilver dropped the elemental charm .



Back to earth into the magic circle. Immediately thunderbolts flew into its center!



The others are safe and now, so are you,
Quick!



Trw! 's airy laughter spread across the silver spaces of the evening air . . .

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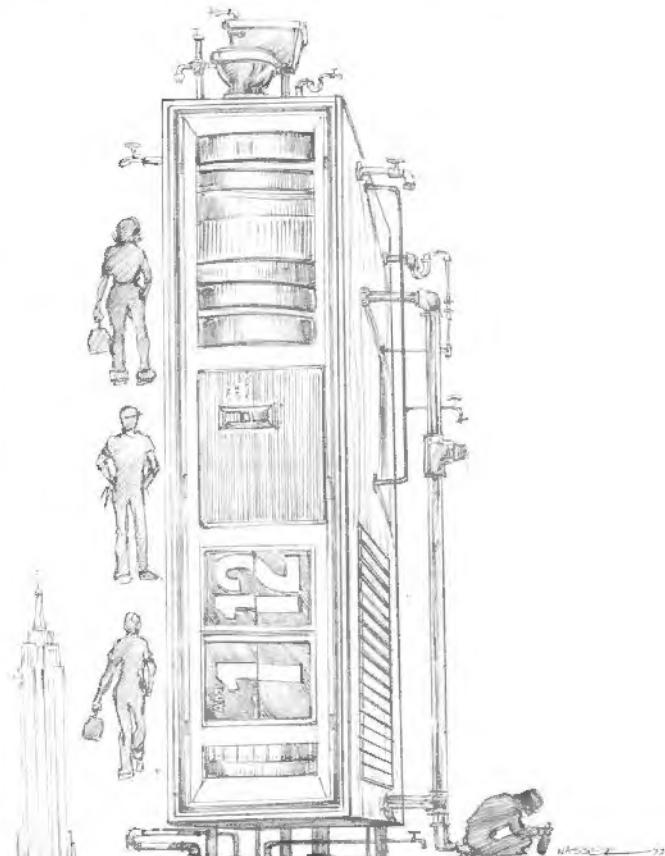


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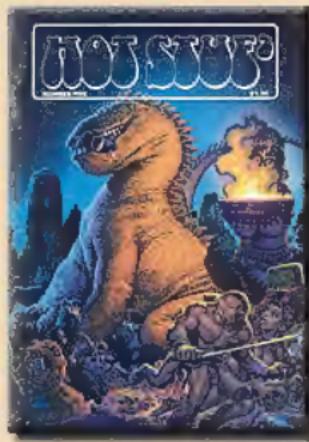
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